

Fighting 13th



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The 13th MEU Newsletter

www.usmc.mil/13thmeu

13th MEU 'makes ready' for upcoming deployment



Photo by Cpl. Andy Hurt

Marines from 3rd Platoon, 1st Force Reconnaissance Company, along with Marines from the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit Command Element, fire .45-caliber power down range during the Dynamic Assault Course at Camp Pendleton's Range 130. The training is part of pre-deployment training exercises for our upcoming deployment.

By Cpl. Andy Hurt
Editor

Marines from 3rd Platoon, 1st Force Reconnaissance Company and the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit Command Element are participating in the early stages of pre-deployment training, by taking part in Maritime Special Purpose Force-reconnaissance courses through Special Operations Training Group at Camp

Pendleton.

Gunnery Sgt. Mark Schmidt, platoon sergeant for 3rd Platoon, 1st Force Reconnaissance Company, said the recent training efforts by his platoon were excellent, and he was looking forward to the deployment.

13th Marine Expeditionary Unit Marines are currently storming through is the Dynamic Assault Course, a close-

quarters weapons familiarization package geared towards orienting forward-operating Marines into the combat mindset for modern operations.

"We're trying to get away from 'Marine Corps rifle range tactics'," said Gunnery Sgt. Chris A. Currie, an SOTG instructor, with a focus on "specialized combat techniques."

In order to properly apply the refined shooting positions and trigger manipulation, there is a short period of instruction before each firing session.

One of the first training curriculums utilized the .45 caliber pistol, a weapon normally exclusive to recon units.

Each Marine received approximately 400 .45-caliber rounds per session.

Students fired at targets from three- to 25-yard firing lines, all under the watchful eyes of the SOTG instructors.

Training will continue to escalate in frequency and intensity until the climax of the cycle, the Interoperability exercise. Scheduled for early March, "that's when all the elements we've been training (for) come together," said Currie.

The 13th MEU will take its final test when all MEU support elements unite for the Special Operations Capable Exercise later this spring.

Inside this issue:

Chaplain offers advice on finding a true bearing in life's path.

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Devil Doc promotes the importance of keeping medical records, physicals and immunizations current.

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Kids Corner!
New feature for our junior Fighting 13th warriors.

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From the Doc: Keep track of your medical status

By HM1 Christopher Roganti
13th MEU Corpsman

Remind your Marines to view the medical status Excel Spreadsheet that has been sent out via email.

If you have not yet checked-in with medical, do so, so that all records can be updated in preparation for the deployment.

Unit members that require a physical should

schedule appointments immediately.

Many Marines still need to check-in with medical, get physicals and turn in health and dental records.

The simple procedure for completing physicals is as follows:

1. Have nothing to eat or drink after 7 p.m. the night prior to having your blood drawn.

Blood draw is the first step in the process. Report to 21 Area Battalion Aid

Station between 6:30 and 9 a.m. to have blood drawn.

2. Report to dental between 6:30 and 9 a.m. to request a T-2 exam.

3. Contact Audiology at 725-2141 to schedule an appointment for a hearing test. These are completed at the 21 Area BAS. Blood work returns in approximately five days.

After you have completed these steps, take your paperwork and health record to the Marine

Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group to schedule the final examination of the physical.

In addition to physicals, Marines should receive all required immunizations.

Any questions or concerns about a service members' status should be directed to medical at 725-4144.

Editor's note: "From the Doc" is a new monthly addition to the Fighting 13th newsletter.

Fighting 13th



Commanding Officer:
Col. James K. LaVine

Public Affairs Officer:
Capt. K.D. Robbins

Public Affairs Chief:
Staff Sgt. Jesus A. Lora

Editor:
Cpl. Andy Hurt

Combat Correspondent:
Sgt. Charles Moore

Combat Camera:
Cpl. Chad Leddy

Combat Camera:
Lance Cpl. James Evans

Combat Camera:
Pfc. Kyle Keathley

Mail inquiries to:
13th Marine Expeditionary Unit
ATTN: Public Affairs Office
Box 555363
Camp Pendleton, CA 92055-5363

Chaplain's Corner

Finding your spiritual bearing in life's path

By Navy Lt. Edward Waldron
Command Chaplain

One of my prior duties as an avionics technician was to administer the annual compass swing.

A compass swing is the calibration of an aircraft's magnetic compass so the pilot can navigate the aircraft free of error.

Before the Global Positioning Satellite (GPS), the compass was the critical instrument in navigation. One degree of error would not be a problem on a short flight, but over hundreds of miles a pilot could get lost.

The compass swing was necessary because a compass accumulated errors over the course of a year.

Errors would come from the shifts in the earth's magnetism, the effect of G-forces on the compass or slight magnetic changes on the skin of an aircraft. These errors can combine to into the potential loss of an aircraft and/or its aircrew.

As each of us goes through life, we too have a moral compass that needs to be calibrated. Our world around us changes, our situation changes and our ideas change within the course of life.

Rarely do we realize that we have changed until we go home to our friends and family; we then find out that a mere degree of change can become a lot more over the course of a few months.

There is a need for personal compass swings. Check for changes. Ask if we want those changes or if we need to adjust our lives around those changes?

Here are some options to help make those compass swings: Regular worship attendance (once a week); talk to our spouses (they will see changes that we don't see); keep some friends around that care enough to ask the hard questions; or take a personal retreat to re-evaluate your life.

Remember, success in life requires careful navigation.

Blessings,
Navy Lt. Edward Waldron
13th MEU Chaplain



13th MEU Admin Notes

Marine Cash

The Marine Cash system will be the only method used to purchase items and services aboard the USS Tarawa and USS Cleveland.

Cash can no longer be used to make purchases.

Marines assigned to the USS Pearl Harbor will use the ATM-At-Sea System.

While on board, use your Marine Cash card to purchase items from the Ship's Store, ship's vending machines and pay for MWR services.

During port visits, use your Marine Cash card at ATMs and in stores that accept MasterCard. The Marine Cash card is a debit card that has no effect on your credit rating.

This standard system will be used for future deployments. There are three ways to deposit funds to your Marine Cash account:

First, while deployed, a Split Pay amount may be sent directly to your Marine Cash account.

Second, you can link your Marine Cash account to an existing checking account to make electronic funds transfers.

Lastly, you can take cash or checks directly to the Disbursing Office to be deposited into your Marine Cash account.

For more information, contact 1st Lt. Anthony Glasgow, 13th MEU Disbursing Officer, at (760)763-1660.

Scholarships

Military spouses are invited to apply for a \$1000.00 scholarship through the National Military Family

Association's Joanne Holbrook-Patton Military Spouse Scholarship Program. An essay question, community involvement and achievement are all considered in the selection criteria.

The scholarships are good for tuition, books, room and board or other fees at colleges, universities and trade schools.

A letter of recommendation is required for eligibility.

Scholarship information and applications can be found online at www.nmfa.org and must be submitted online by March 31.

Anheuser-Busch Park Admission

Any active duty, active reserve, ready reserve service member or National Guardsman is entitled to free admission under the program. Service members may register online or in the entrance plaza of participating parks. They must also present a valid Department of Defense photo ID.

Up to three direct dependents of military personnel are also entitled to free admission. Minor dependents must be accompanied by an adult.

Busch Gardens Williamsburg and SeaWorld San Antonio are seasonal operations that will remain closed until spring. Personnel interested in visiting those parks should check local operating schedules.

SeaWorld Orlando, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay and SeaWorld San Diego are open year round.

For more information, visit <http://herosalute.com/cavatx/index.html>.

Stand by, 5 ... 4 ... 3 ...



Photo by Sgt. Charles Moore

Lance Cpl. Donovan Draper, Battalion Landing Team 2/1, prepares to fire three claymore mines. Marines from BLT 2/1 connected three mines together, creating a simultaneous explosion that covered a 60 degree radius, during the Raid Leaders Course demolition training. The training is part of a five day training package to prepare squad leaders to lead their Marines in various combat techniques.

13th MEU Warrior Birthdays

Sgt. Tory Swearingen - February 10

Sgt. Brian Childs - February 17

Capt. Jan Durham - February 20

Capt. Mark Rodgers - March 13

Sgt. Carlos Martinez - March 15

Staff Sgt. John Mundy - March 15

Sgt. Ramon Morin, Jr. - March 15

Sgt. Maj. David A. Deal - March 26

The Public Affairs Office wants

YOU!

For submission in the Fighting 13th. Submit any ideas you have to the Public Affairs Office at 13meupao@13meu.usmc.mil, or call (760)763-0740. Submissions can also be sent via snail mail to:

13th Marine Expeditionary Unit

ATTN: Public Affairs Office

Box 555363

Camp Pendleton, CA 92055-5363

JAG films aboard Camp Pendleton

13th MEU Marines support filming, see camera time as extras



Photo by Sgt. Charles Moore

Corporal Chad Leddy, combat photographer, 13th MEU, passes out relief supplies. Leddy, along with several other Camp Pendleton Marines and Sailors, appeared as extras on a recent JAG episode.

By Sgt. Charles Moore
Combat Correspondent

Military investigators recently charged a Camp Pendleton based Marine in the death of a Nicaraguan man. Cpl. Caden Duran has been accused of murder after he allegedly struck the man during a humanitarian assistance mission. Duran was delivering relief supplies to hurricane victims when a mob of locals overran his truck. In an attempt to regain control, Duran allegedly hit the man with the end of his rifle ...

At least this is what Hollywood said.

The scenario is the plot to

an upcoming episode of the popular CBS military courtroom drama, JAG.

Actor Seamus Dever, who had roles on Cold Case and CSI, plays the part of Duran, who is being prosecuted by Lt. Col. Sarah "Mac" Mackenzie, played by popular actress Catherine Bell. Producers used Camp Pendleton training areas, along with 13th MEU Marines, to film several scenes for the upcoming episode.

Filming began around 7:30 a.m. at Assault Craft Unit 5. Several Camp Pendleton Marines were cast as extras. ACU-5 filming ended with lunch and a movement to Red

Beach. Here, the crew filmed Marines from the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit and N Battery, 5th Battalion, 14th Marines, 4th Marine Division, along with ACU-5 Sailors. They also filmed USMC MTRV seven-ton trucks and an ACU-5 landing craft, air cushioned (LCAC).

"We thought we were just going to be dropping off (the trucks) and quitting," said Petty Officer 1st Class Richard M. Wells, LCAC navigator. Wells and his LCAC crew were initially tasked with driving the LCAC to the beach to unload two trucks.

After arriving on the beach, they gave the crew a ride and were asked to become extras. "We were as (almost) excited about being on the show as they were about being on the LCAC," Wells said. "They were pretty jazzed."

Over the past nine seasons, the show has filmed on many military installations, but military life and equipment remains foreign to many crew members. It quickly became apparent that many of the crew members were more at home on an L.A. filming set than a military base. "What's an LCAC?" one of the crew members asked, as he was standing on the loading deck.

The Marines viewed this as an opportunity to introduce the crew and the civilian world what Marines do. "It gives the Marines an oppor-

tunity to get out of the (military) environment and show what they can do to the public," said Staff Sgt. George T. Barreto, supply chief, N Battery. "It (also) gives Hollywood a more realistic view of what we do."

Marines from N Battery were coming off weekend drill when they volunteered to support the shoot.

The Marines were conducting convoy operations in preparation for an upcoming deployment to Iraq. The shoot offered them a little extra training.

"Our unit never gets to do amphibious operations," said Cpl. Miguel A. Aguilar, truck driver, Battery N. Aguilar said he practiced boarding and de-boarding the LCAC, and rode on an LCAC for the first time during several takes.

Aguilar said the show's plot added to the training by making him more aware of what could happen during their upcoming Iraq deployment.

"We were taught to always be defensive and never complacent," he said. "This is an example of complacency. There were not enough Marines."

While some plot lines seem unrealistic, JAG producers said they try to make each episode as real as possible. JAG keeps a former active duty Marine on set to advise directors and coach actors on

Explosive



Marines from 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Division detonate a thermite grenade during the Raid Leaders course. The grenade reaches temperatures of 4000 degrees F and is normally used to burn and destroy equipment such as enemy rifles.

By Sgt. Charles Moore
Combat Correspondent

There is a well-known Marine Corps bumper sticker that reads “destroyed in less than 30 minutes or your money back.”

Marines from Battalion Landing Team, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Division recently did some destroying of their own.

Squad leaders from BLT 2/1 spent a week at Raid Leaders course to prepare themselves to teach and lead their Marines during the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit Raid course. The five-day course featured six live fires, including shotgun fire, close air support (CAS) and an all-encompassing raid.

However, one afternoon was solely devoted to blowing stuff up.

The Marines learned basic demoli-

tion techniques using Marine Corps explosives vice ““Hey, I’m improvising (with composition four, plastic explosive),”” said Gunnery Sgt. Stuart Glass, chief raid instructor, Special Operations Training Group.

“We show them the standards and gear available to them,” he said. “We get these guys spun up to the level they should be at.” Glass added the leaders course is designed to “teach the teacher” so these leaders will know what’s going on when their Marines are going through the regular course. For many, the course helped the leaders hone their skills.

“It’s just a refresher, so whenever the situation comes up, we know what we’re doing,” said Lance Cpl. An D. Nguyen, a machine gunner from 2/1. “It keeps everyone safe. They know what they’re doing.”

Nguyen commented on a few additional benefits to the course.

“I love blowing stuff up,” Nguyen said. “What was the biggest one? ... The crater charge? That was my favorite.”

While the day was entertaining for the Marines, it also proved educational.

“The claymore (mine) is pretty easy, everyone learned it in SOI (School of Infantry), but I learned quite a lot about setting up a daisy chain,” said Lance Cpl. Travis King, a combat engineer attached to 2/1.

The course taught Marines effective employment of claymores, creating obstacles for the enemy and breaching enemy techniques.

While many seasoned infantrymen pride themselves on their abilities to adapt and overcome, the SOTG instructors expanded their knowledge in appropriate employment of demolitions.

Photo by Sgt. Charles Moore

FRO Corner

Capt. K.D. Robbins

As the pre-deployment work-up cycle begins for the Marines and Sailors of the Fighting 13th, so begins the pre-deployment work-up cycle for our families. The MEU Public Affairs Office will offer valuable information through our various venues to include our 13th MEU website, www.usmc.mil/13thmeu and the "Fighting 13th" monthly newsletter. This information will help you and your families to assume a proactive role involving administrative, personal and legal matters associated with a deployment and life in the military.

This month, we focus on the resources available to families through Marine Corps Community Services and Marine Corps Family Team Building:

LINKS (Lifestyle, Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills)

The LINKS program is ideal for newly married spouses and spouses who have yet to go through a deployment. It offers an introduction to Marine Corps terminology, benefits and support services. Sessions are offered weekdays, evenings and Saturdays. Free, on-site childcare will be available. For more information on LINKS programs, contact your 13th MEU Family Readiness Officer at: FRO@13meu.usmc.mil.

PREP (Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program)

The PREP program is available to engaged and married couples interested in developing better communication, teamwork, problem-solving skills, hidden issues, commitment and friendships.

The three-day workshop runs monthly aboard Camp Pendleton. For more information on PREP, contact your 13th MEU Family Readiness Officer at FRO@13meu.usmc.mil.

CREDO (Chaplain's Religious Enrichment Development Operations)

CREDO programs include personal growth, marriage enrichment, spiritual growth, family, unit team building and warrior transition retreats. For more information on CREDO programs, contact the 13th MEU Chaplain, Chaplain Waldron at waldrona@13meu.usmc.mil.

Remember, the pre-deployment training cycle is not just for our Marines and Sailors; it is for our family members as well. Stay motivated!

JAG from Page 4

military life.

"You don't just throw on a uniform and 'presto', you're a Marine," said Kevin Coster, 2nd assistant director. "We hope our actors stand up to the Marines. That's a very hard thing (to do)."

Even veteran actors said the Marines bring something to the show that professional actors do not.

"The actors have to be taught how to stand; how to salute," said Bell. "It's always exciting to interact with Marines. I brought my whole family."

The cast and crew of JAG spent a lot of time interacting with Marines and Sailors and military equipment.

Most were impressed with the equipment the military used and their ease in operating it. One co-producer mentioned he "likes watching the toys (Marines) get to play with."

The service members involved did their best to accommodate the filming, and the crew said they did an exceptional job.

"I wouldn't mind doing this (for a living). I could be famous," joked Cpl. Chris J. Victoria, disbursing clerk, 13th MEU. "It was a lot more than I expected. Even though I was just standing around, I'm worn out."

The production wrapped up late in the day and many of the crew left with a new admiration for the military.

Fighting 13th Logo Gear List

Logo Watches: \$10

"Dry fit" (Poly-wick) Shirts (Black or White): \$20

Fighting 13th Polo Shirt: \$20

Fighting 13th Wind-shirt: \$25

Fighting 13th Green Skivy Shirt: \$8

Lexan Water Bottle: \$5

Fighting 13th Logo Watch Cap: \$5

Old WestPac Shirt: \$1 (XXL Only)

Fighting 13th Coffee Mug: \$3

Red Mug: \$1

Key Chain: \$1 (Wood) \$2 (Metal)

Patches: \$4

Stickers: \$.50



Upcoming Training Events

- Feb 22-25 Marine Expeditionary Unit Exercise (MEUEX)
- March 19-03 April Training In An Urban Environment (TRUEX/MAGTFEX)
- April 13-25 Expeditionary Strike Group Exercise. First underway period
- April 20-May 2 Revised Combined Arms Exercise (RCAX)

MEU's around the world

Submitted by 11th MEU PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DUKE, Iraq (Feb. 7, 2005) — After a whirlwind deployment to Iraq, Marines and sailors of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit will begin the first of several homecomings today at Camp Pendleton, Calif., after nearly nine months away from home.

11th MEU spent seven successful months in the Shia provinces of Najaf, Qadisiyah and Karbala, stabilizing the region for more than 2.5 million Iraqis and setting the conditions for a violence-free national election where up to 85% of eligible voters voted.

In addition, Marines facilitated the spending of more than \$36 million on 505 reconstruction projects, \$9 million in condolence payments, and trained more than 16,000 Iraqi security forces in this relatively peaceful region of Iraq. However, the area hadn't always been quiet.

In August in Najaf — the spiritual heart of the Shia world — the MEU's 2,200 Marines and sailors battled and defeated radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's militia during an intense three-week fight.

The ensuing peace and trust established with the locals paved the way for one of the most aggressive reconstruction programs in all of Iraq. In five months, 418 projects worth more than \$32 million dollars were started. MEU projects ranged from renovating 105 schools and constructing six new markets to building/renovating three medical clinics and dredging five water canals — all using local contractors and workers and stimulating the economy. Projects funded by the Iraqi Interim Government and other U.S. military and government agencies included the construction/refurbishment of 36 police stations and traffic check-

points, the refurbishment of 24 schools, and the construction of eight new schools, four community centers, and four water treatment units.

In addition, Marines distributed \$9 million to 16,000 Najafis who experienced damage during August's fighting as part of a massive and innovative condolence payment program.

Marines also trained and equipped the province's 7,600 Iraqi police, border police and soldiers from the Iraqi Army's 405th Battalion. These forces did so well that on Nov. 30, three months after decisive combat operations ended in Najaf, the 11th MEU commander declared "local control" in the province.

While half of the MEU's forces were in Najaf, the others were located in Qadisiyah province's major city — Diwaniyah. In addition to participating in August's fighting in Najaf, these Marines conducted security patrols out in town and trained, equipped and mentored soldiers from the 404th Battalion and 50th Brigade of the Iraqi Army.

Reconstruction was also a focus in Diwaniyah. In three months, more than \$3 million was spent on 85 reconstruction projects, and a \$1.8 million barracks for the Iraqi soldiers was also built. In addition, Marines conducted four humanitarian assistance operations, providing limited medical and dental care and distributing thousands of thick winter blankets, school supplies, toys, food and water to more than 1,500 Iraqis. Marines also donated more than 4,000 backpacks to students in the city and distributed thousands of toys to local orphanages.

On Nov. 30, the 11th MEU relinquished control of Qadisiyah province to the Polish Army as part of a realignment of forces in southern Iraq. On Dec. 21, MEU Marines replaced the Polish Army in Karbala province. Marines immediately began training their third Iraqi Army unit, the 401st Battalion, and preparing the Iraqi security forces for Karbala's elections.

During November, hundreds of 11th MEU Marines also supported the fight in Fallujah. Some augmented forces in the city, while others ensured the security and stability of the assault's back door in the cities of Kandari and Nasar Wa Salam. They returned to Najaf and Karbala in December.

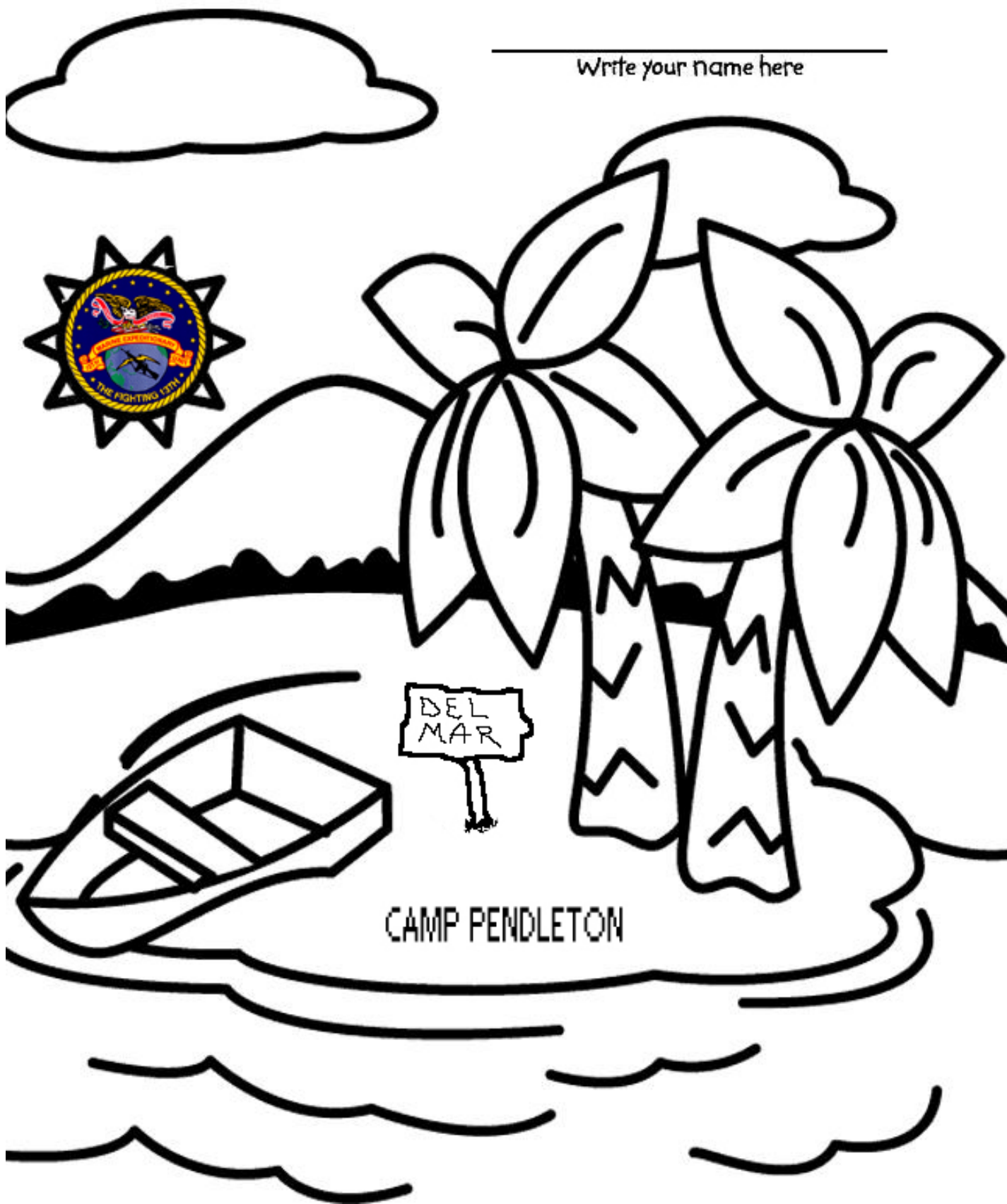
With January's national elections going off without a hitch in both provinces, the deployment had an uplifting end.

The 11th MEU is comprised of Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment; Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 166 (reinforced); MEU Service Support Group 11, and the Command Element.

Editor's note: More than 400 Marines and Sailors from the 11th MEU have already returned, and more than 600 are expected to return Feb. 19. Marines and Sailors from the 11th MEU are scheduled to continue returning through March.



Photo by Gunnery Sgt. Robert K. Blankenship
Lance Cpl. Mathew Blissitt, Amphibious Assault Platoon, Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 11 MEU (SOC), works to remove nuts and bolts as part of the cleaning procedure on an AAVP7-A1 here Jan. 21. Marines of AAV platoon will spend the next few days completing a pre-wash down process before they head home.

Write your name here

To the parents and young warriors of the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit: We are proud to introduce our first “Kids Corner” page. The KC will include crossword puzzles, mazes and coloring pages. This month’s page features a coloring page of the Del Mar Area. This page reflects some of the great things that the 13th MEU has come to enjoy: Beautiful beaches, clear water and a variety of Navy ships. Parents may return the colored pages to the Public Affairs Office, where they will be displayed around the command post to motivate our 13th MEU warriors. Ideas for future Kids Corner pages should be sent to the Public Affairs Office at pao@13meu.usmc.mil. Thank you, and happy coloring!